

Transcription: Jack Rife

Today is Thursday, February 10th, 2011. My name is James Crabtree and I'll be interviewing today Mr. Jack Rife.

Jack Rife: And this is Jack Rife.

Yes sir. I'm at the General Land Office Building in Austin, Texas, and Mr. Rife is at the Floresville Veterans Home in Floresville, Texas. This interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. Sir, thank you very much for taking the time to talk to us today. I was just asking you before we started, you said you were in the Army? The first question is to ask him what branch of the service he was in.

Female: OK, Jack, what branch of the service were you in?

Jack Rife: I don't remember. Army? Yeah.

Female: You were in the Army?

Jack Rife: Yeah.

Ask him about his childhood.

Female: What was your childhood like?

Jack Rife: I was always playing with the dogs.

Female: Did you have a lot of dogs?

Jack Rife: No, I had one.

Female: Did you have brothers and sisters?

Jack Rife: Yes I did. Oh, I don't know how many brothers and sisters, but I've got about six of them.

Female: Wow, that's a big family.

Ask him where he was from.

Female: Where were you from?

Jack Rife: I'm from Von Ormy.

Female: Von Ormy? In Texas?

Jack Rife: Yeah, Von Ormy, Texas.

Female: Oh, that's just up the road.

Jack Rife: Yeah.

And ask him how old he was, I think he had mentioned beforehand that he was 18 when he went in the military. Ask him how he came to be part of the Army.

Female: What made you decide to go to the Army? You said that you were 18 when you entered. What made you decide to go?

Jack Rife: Well I was always, I always was to go in the Army.

Female: Why?

Jack Rife: I don't know, I guess to be in the fighting or something.

Female: Was it good money at the time? Was it something to get you out of where you were from to make money?

Jack Rife: No, it was about the same.

Ask him if he remembers where he was when Pearl Harbor was attacked.

Female: Do you remember where you were at when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

Jack Rife: When Pearl Harbor was attacked, I don't remember. I know when we got attacked, but I didn't, I can't tell you what date it was or who it was –

Ask him what he remembers about going to boot camp.

Female: What do you remember about going to boot camp?

Jack Rife: I remember that I was in a place where they had plenty of fighting, but we did most of it we did during the war. I was always in, well, I don't remember. I know that I was in there and they come to get me, and my father was from Germany, and my mother was from Mexico. So they held me back until I could get, I guess to get used to what's going on. But I didn't go in the fighting until oh, I guess, I don't know. It must have been – I don't know what year it was, but they took me into the war and I was just a kid as far as I can remember. I was out there playing with the dogs when they come to get me and I was with my father, and he was from Germany. My mother was from Mexico. So they wouldn't take me right away because they had to find out something about me, I don't know what it was.

Ask him if he spoke German and Spanish growing up.

Female: Did you speak German and Spanish growing up?

Jack Rife: Yes.

Female: So you know German pretty good, fluently?

Jack Rife: I know some of it, not all of it.

Female: What about Spanish?

Jack Rife: Spanish I know pretty good.

Ask him if he remembers where he went during the war, if he went to Europe or to Japan or anyplace like that?

Female: Do you remember where you went during the war? Did you go to Europe or Japan?

Jack Rife: I went to Germany, and I found out that my mother was from Mexico and my father was from –

Ask him if he has any memories of what his favorite memories are of being in the Army.

Female: What are your favorite memories of being in the Army?

Jack Rife: Always fighting. That's all I can remember, most of it is fighting.

Does he remember any of his friends or those that he served with during the war?

Female: Do you remember any of your friends or people that you served with during the war?

Jack Rife: Well, I talked to most everybody as far as that goes. The only thing I can remember about that was I was from one Army was just in the United States, and I was with the German army, I wasn't in the German army, but I wanted to get in and I couldn't get in because I wasn't old enough and I didn't know the people. The only one that I knew that was army invited or whatever it is, it was when I was about 18 years old and I got into the Army and I had a dog, and I fooled around with that dog all the time. I wanted to get in the Army, so first I went to oh, I don't know where I was, but I was over in the, I don't know.

Ask him just to tell us about the war, ask him to tell us about the Army. It seems like he's got these stories, we've just got to spark something and start talking, and if he can talk for a while we'll just record that. I know there are stories in there – just ask him what he remembers the most about the Army.

Female: What do you remember most about the Army?

Jack Rife: I was always in some action. I was fighting here, fighting there, everywhere you know, but it's been so long I can't even remember now. I'm almost 97 years old right now. It's so long ago that I can't hardly remember.

Female: Did you meet a lot of ladies?

Jack Rife: Uh yeah, I met a lot of ladies. Well, a lot of things I can't say.

Ask him if he remembers coming home from the war.

Female: Do you remember coming home from the war?

Jack Rife: Yeah, I remember when I came home, everybody was around there, everybody was singing songs and playing guitars, and let's see what else –

Ask him if his mom and dad were happy to have him home.

Female: Were your mom and dad happy that you were home?

Jack Rife: Yeah, they were happy. It's been so long ago that I can't even remember half of it.

Ask him when he got married, did he get married after the war?

Female: Did you get married after the war?

Jack Rife: Yeah, I got married after the war and well I guess I was just, one of them things, I don't know. I went on with what was going on in the world as far as that goes, and I was a man that oh, it's been so long ago that I can't even remember half of it.

Did he have any children?

Female: Did you have any children?

Jack Rife: Well yes I do. I have a daughter and she lives up in Tennessee somewhere, and I haven't seen her for a long time.

What did he do after the war, does he remember what his job was?

Female: What kind of work did you do after the war?

Jack Rife: After the war, I worked at a cotton gin, and the cotton gin was just about half a block from my home, so I went from there and I've got – well, I talked to the guy in this home where they had beer, and they had, well, it was a place where they, oh I don't know, I can't remember half of it. Anyhow, what I did, I went into the service and I came out with my, it's been such a long time I can't remember what's going on.

Tell him that everybody at the Land Office is proud of him for his service.

Female: Everybody at the Land Office is proud of you for your service.

And we want to thank him –

Female: And they want to thank you.

And in a few weeks we're going to send him a letter and a certificate from Commissioner Patterson thanking him for his service to our nation.

Female: In a few weeks they're going to send you a letter, a certificate from Patterson in recognition for what you've done.

Jack Rife: OK.

Female: Thank you, we thank you.

Jack Rife: You're welcome.

Ma'am, thank you very much. I know it turned out to be kind of difficult with him not being able to hear very well, but we'll still send the interview and the certificate and all that sort of thing, and it's just frustrating because I know that there had to have been stories in there and he just can't bring them out anymore.

Female: Oh yeah.

Thank you very much for all your help.

[End of recording]